

Report of International Workshop

- 1. Title:** “Preserving local knowledge in the Horn of Africa: Challenges and prospects for collaborative research in oral literature, music and ritual practices”
- Venue:** Harari Cultural Center Hall (Harar, Ethiopia)
- Date:** 17-18 September 2008
- Sponsor:** African Local Knowledge Research Group, jointly with Global COE Program of Kyoto University
- Co-hosting:** Harari People National Regional State’s Culture Tourism and Information Bureau; Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology (SoSA), Addis Ababa University; Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES), Addis Ababa University.
- 2. Program:** Attached
- 3. Number of participants:** 89 (18 presenters)
- 4. Report of workshop:**

In this workshop, international scholars were invited to spend two days in Harar, together with Ethiopian scholars and representatives of local institutions, to present research experiences and reflections on the challenges and prospects for the documentation and preservation of local knowledge in the Horn of Africa, with special attention given to the domain of intangible heritage.

The aim was that of promoting interdisciplinary research in oral literature, music and ritual practices, encouraging collaborative work among international scholars, local researchers and communities.

The program (see attached document) was structured in four sessions that were opened by a welcome speech from the vice-speaker of the Harari Regional Council Muktar Ali, illustrations of the African Local Knowledge and Global COE funding projects by Masayoshi Shigeta and Akio Tanabe, a presentation about “UNESCO activities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the Horn of Africa” by Fumiko Ohinata, and an introduction to the themes of the workshop by Simone Tarsitani.

The first session, titled “Music”, contained four presentations about research on Harari musical heritage, about scholarship on Ethiopian music, and about the history of the Hamina people, who practice song-mendicancy in Ethiopia. The second session “Islam”, was composed of two presentations contributing to Ethiopian Islamic studies and a study on the religious ritual activities of Zanzibar, which provided an occasion of comparison to the Ethiopian context. In the third session, two presentations offered reflections on and ideas to the debate on the field of Visual Anthropology. The last session, included six presentations dealing with linguistic, historical, religious, and anthropological studies on Harar. In the final discussion, opened and addressed by Akio Tanabe and closed with a remark by Masayoshi Shigeta, some of the main issues that had emerged during the workshop were further developed.

Rather than providing a comprehensive representation of the works that are currently carried on in such broad disciplinary and geographic areas, this meeting, through

several significant case studies, was an occasion to highlight and reflect on significant issues related to the methodology involved in the documentation and preservation of intangible heritage. A general picture emerged of how any attempt to research and help preserve intangible cultural heritage in Ethiopia and in the Horn of Africa may benefit from interdisciplinary studies. Additionally from many of the presentations insight was gained into how important (and not without complications) it is to establish positive exchanges and collaboration between local and foreign researchers and institutions. Furthermore, of great significance was the participation of a large number of scholars, elders and representatives of local institutions from Harar, the hosting city. They actively contributed in all phases of the workshop, providing a tangible example of the resourcefulness and complexity of the interaction between researchers and bearers of the African local knowledge.

The workshop was closed by a visit to the recently established Harar City Museum, based on the Harari collection of tangible and oral cultural heritage of Abdullahi Ali Sherif.

The day after the workshop, a group of participants joined a study tour to the Argobba village of Koromi and to several Islamic holy places near Harar.

5. Proceedings: There is a plan to publish the proceedings of the workshop

6. Photos: The following photos illustrate the hosting place and moments of the workshop



1. Gate of the Harari Cultural Center

2. Workshop participants in front of the Harari Cultural Center Hall



3. Presentation of papers



4. Discussion with the participants



5-8. Buffet dinner at the end of the workshop



9-11. Study tour to the Argobba village Koromi



12-13. Argobba people from Koromi singing for the workshop participants

14. Visit to a Muslim shrine